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Acknowledgments

City of Sunnyvale

Parks & Recreation Department

Curtis Black, Superintendent of Parks

Julie Oliver, Parks Supervisor

PG & E

Len Grilli, Land Agent

Design Team

the beals group, inc.

Derek McKee, Principal

Bill Drulias, Director of Design

Todd Bronk, Job Captain

Mike Pruitt, Designer

Rico Lardizabal, Designer

Jesse Markman, Designer

Aerial Photography

Aero-Geodetic Corporation

Introduction

The City of Sunnyvale initiated this project in response to the request from members of the Cherry Chase Neighborhood to create small parks out of the easement properties between Dona Avenue and Ramona Avenue, or sell the city owned parcels to adjacent neighbors. (Refer to page 4 and cover for an aerial photograph of the proposed site.)

Therefore, three land use options are available to the community for the open space:

1. No development
2. Land sale to adjacent home owners
3. Development

This document is a Feasibility Study exploring the development options and park concepts for the easement property between Dona Avenue and Ramona Avenue in Sunnyvale.

The components of this study include:

1. Why the open space is needed
2. Site Description
3. Site History
4. Land Use Options
5. Concept Review Process
6. Program Concept Overview
7. Conclusions and Recommendations
8. Appendix A - Construction Costs

Why is development of open space needed?

As the Bay Area becomes increasingly populated, continual development is quickly encroaching on and eliminating open space. Open spaces can be developed to provide places for recreation, fitness, and environmental appreciation within communities, or be left in their naturalized state.

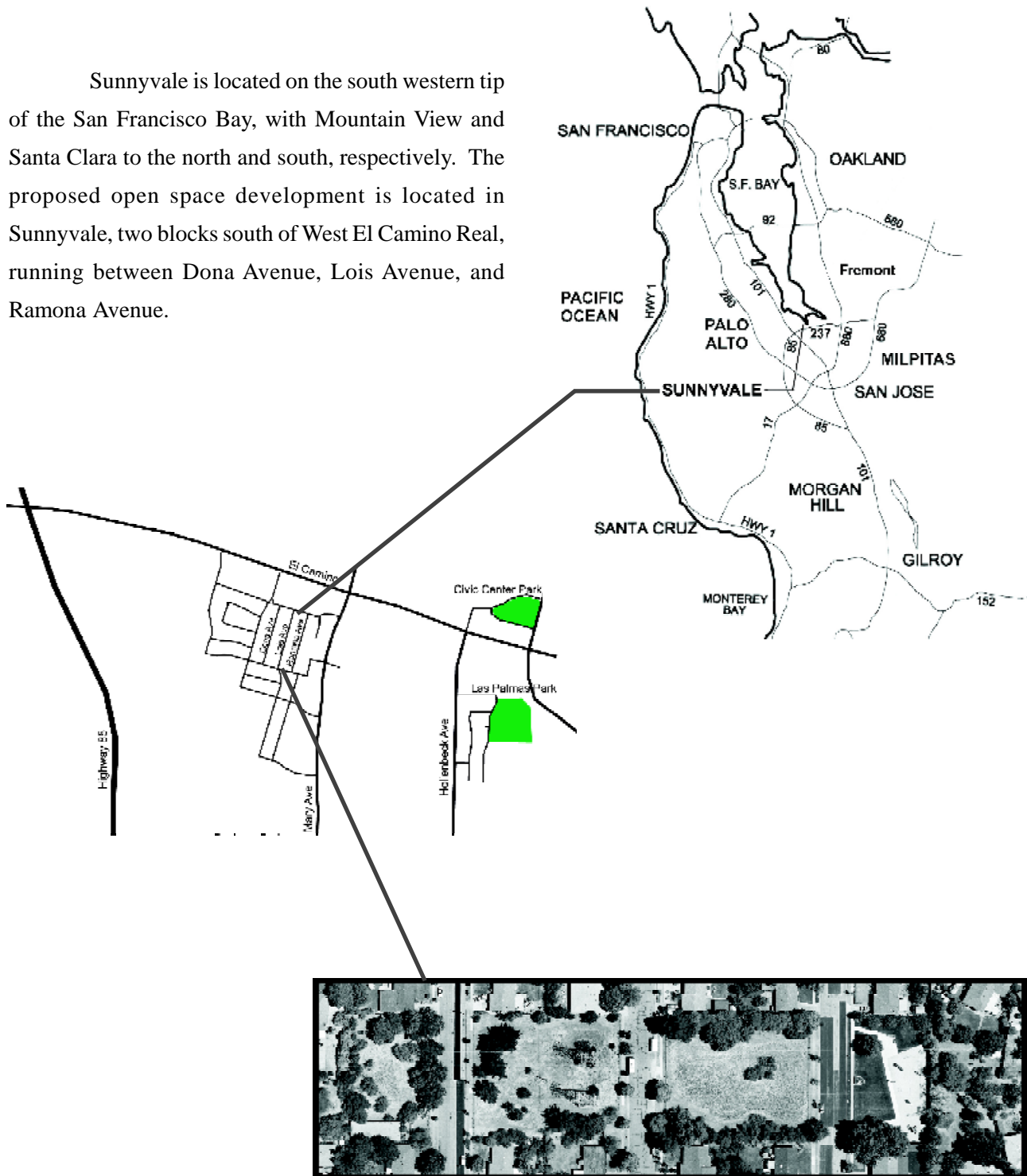
The development of open space into a park is an excellent way to create areas in which parents and children can relax, play, and enjoy green space outside of their own backyards.



Example of a developed utility corridor.

Project Context

Sunnyvale is located on the south western tip of the San Francisco Bay, with Mountain View and Santa Clara to the north and south, respectively. The proposed open space development is located in Sunnyvale, two blocks south of West El Camino Real, running between Dona Avenue, Lois Avenue, and Ramona Avenue.



Local aerial of Dona, Lois, and Ramona Avenues, respectively

Site Description and Analysis

The proposed open spaces are between three streets with an existing building and park at either end. The three land parcels are west of Greenwood Manor Park and are fenced off to public access. There are two 115,00KW electrical towers located on the parcel between Lois Avenue and Dona Avenue, whose safety issues are considered on page six.

All three parcels are owned by PG&E, with the perimeter parcels being owned by the City of Sunnyvale. There are many mature trees on the properties, most of which need to be pruned or removed due to PG&E regulations. The building on the west side of Dona Avenue was used at one time as a community meeting site, including use by The Girl Scouts. However, at this point the building is not up to code and either needs to be renovated or removed.

All three parcels are in need of major restoration and redesign but have the potential to be developed and used by the community.

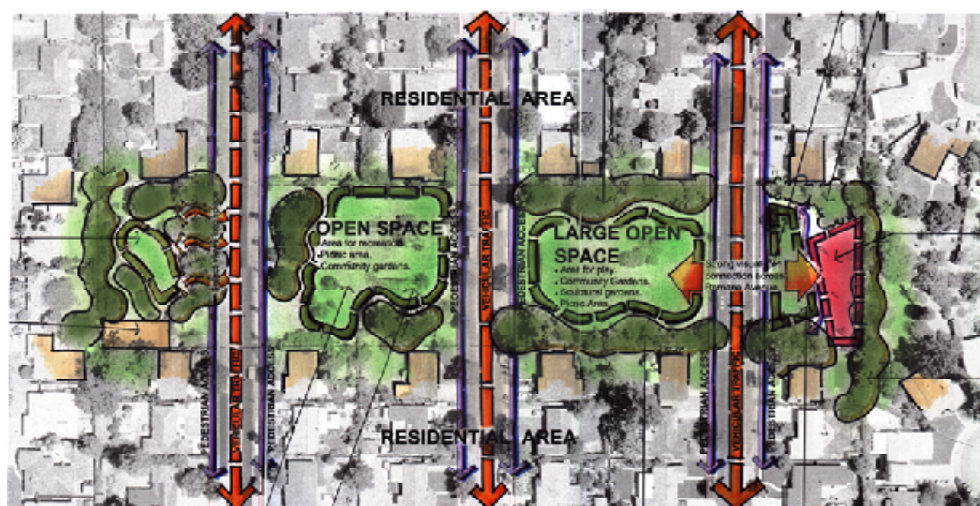
Site History

The history of the site is important to consider when creating a design for long-term public usage.

Originally, the property contained orchards. As the Bay Area expanded southward into Sunnyvale, the orchards were quickly replaced with housing communities and the commercial areas needed to support them.

The orchard property was bought by PG&E in July of 1954, and the 115,000 KW power towers were installed to provide power to the growing area.

In 1955 the City of Sunnyvale created Greenwood Manor Park, which was included in the master plan for the city's development. The "Girl Scout House," the community building located on the west side of Dona Avenue, was built in 1956 by neighborhood volunteers. The building is currently not being used and needs renovations to bring it up to code.



Site analysis diagram of the open space development



A view of an open space parcel from Dona Avenue

The easement properties remained open to the street, and thus to the public until July 1998. Conflict arose in the mid 1990s within the community as to whether the properties should be accessible to children. Some parents wanted their children to be able to ride their bikes and play in the open space areas, as there were few local parks nearby. Other parents were concerned about the safety of their children while using the land. Eventually the dissent among the community members inspired PG&E to erect fences to prevent further public access.

Potential Development Issues

When creating public space it is important to consider all potential safety issues and incorporate solutions into the overall design.

Street traffic is the most significant concern in the overall structure of the open space setting. Because traffic will run perpendicular through three streets, it is necessary to minimize or eliminate the possibility of cars driving “through” the park and conflicting with pedestrian movement.

Eliminating vehicular access through Lois Avenue (the middle of the three streets) via a cul-de-sac, would create a cohesive structure within the park and create a large usable space. An additional cul-de-sac on Ramona Avenue would enable Greenwood Manor Park to become incorporated into the park with no concern of children crossing a busy street. Utilizing Dona Avenue and the parcel west of it for parking, or eliminating vehicular access on Dona Avenue, would prove to be viable and efficient options for dealing with traffic.



The sidewalk along Greenwood Manor Park

There are two 115,000KW electrical towers located on the parcel between Lois Avenue and Dona Avenue which pose a potential safety issue. Any development in the open space must address and minimize the potential conflicts between the users and towers.

A typical solution is to remove the cross supports on the bottom section of the power towers. This does not compromise the structural integrity of the towers, nor does it inhibit access to them by workers, as access ladders would be installed.

Safety issues involving EMF (electromagnetic field) exposure from high voltage power lines have come up lately in the news as well as in the medical literature as a possible cancer causing hazard. Recent reviews by organizations such as the EPA, the National Radiological Protection Board of the UK, and many others have concluded that the existing evidence, although suggestive, does not show that EMFs cause cancer or other health risks. EMF exposure to people in the vicinity of these towers should not be a concern in this open space area.

Additional considerations need to be addressed during specific design processes, including police, fire, and ambulatory access to the open space and nearby streets.



A view of the power towers from Lois Avenue

Parking Analysis

It has been shown from previous examples of open space development that the creation of park space can increase traffic and parking needs. Creating safe and accessible handicap parking and loading zones is necessary for successful open space development.



On street parking adjacent to Greenwood Manor Park

Careful consideration would have to be taken in the development of this open space in regards to parking and traffic needs. Currently, there is enough on-street parking for Dona, Lois, and Ramona Avenues to accommodate each of the open space parcels. However, there could potentially be a need for additional parking in the future, therefore any specific design actions should include an associated analysis of parking and traffic issues.



A view of current street parking in the area

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